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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

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TITLE: AIR VALVE FOR A CAP PROVIDED WITH A MOUTHPIECE FOR DRINKING

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AMENDED CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) An air valve ~~(13)~~ for a lid ~~(2)~~ of a liquid container, which includes an annular membrane, wherein said lid ~~(2)~~ contains at least one air passage opening ~~(19)~~, ~~characterized in that~~ said air valve comprising a reception element ~~(21)~~ including a peripheral groove ~~(24)~~ that is open towards the inner side of the lid is fastened to the inner side of the lid and comprises at least one air entry opening ~~(20)~~ communicating with the air passage opening ~~(19)~~ of the lid ~~(2)~~ and leading into the groove ~~(24)~~, wherein a ring ~~(14)~~ is insertable or inserted in the groove ~~(24)~~ and the air entry opening ~~(20)~~ is sealed at equal pressures on either side of the air entry opening ~~(20)~~ and at an overpressure at the inner side of the lid, due to the bias of at least one groove wall ~~(26)~~ designed as an annular membrane, and the air entry opening ~~(20)~~ is released at an underpressure at the inner side of the lid.
2. (currently amended) An air valve according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the end region ~~(28)~~ of the ring ~~(14)~~ facing the air entry opening ~~(20)~~ of the reception element ~~(21)~~ in the inserted position of the ring ~~(14)~~ is designed to be substantially conical in cross section.
3. (currently amended) An air valve according to claim 2, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the end region ~~(28)~~ of the ring ~~(14)~~ facing the air entry opening ~~(20)~~ of the reception element ~~(21)~~ in the inserted position of the ring ~~(14)~~ comprises at least one recess ~~(29)~~.

4. (currently amended) An air valve according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 3~~, characterized in that claim 1, wherein the ring (11) is fixable or fixed in the reception element (21) by the aid of a snap connection.
5. (currently amended) An air valve according to claim 4, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the ring (11) comprises on its outer side a circumferential bead (25) for snapping into the groove (24) of the reception element (21).
6. (currently amended) An air valve according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 5~~, characterized in that claim 1, wherein the inner groove wall (26) is designed as an annular membrane.
7. (currently amended) An air valve according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 6~~, characterized in that claim 1, wherein the annular membrane (26) comprises at least one thin spot (27) to fix the bias of the annular membrane.
8. (currently amended) An air valve according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 7~~, characterized in that claim 1, wherein the ring (11) is connected with a fastening ring (10) extending in the direction of a preferably central lid opening, via an inwardly extending connection flange (12).
9. (currently amended) An air valve according to claim 8, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein at least one ventilation opening (30) is provided in the connection flange (12).
10. (currently amended) An air valve according to claim 9, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the ventilation opening (30) of the connection flange (29), in the inserted position of the ring (11), is located adjacent to the inner groove wall (26) designed as an annular membrane.
11. (currently amended) A drinking mouthpiece (4) of a liquid container, which is made of a substantially elastic material and arranged on a lid (2) including an air valve (13) according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 10~~ claim 1.

12. (currently amended) A drinking mouthpiece according to claim 11, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the soft drinking mouthpiece (1), ~~which is preferably made of a thermoplastic elastomer (TPE),~~ is produced by a multi-component injection molding process in one piece with the hard lid (2), ~~which is preferably made of polypropylene (PP).~~

13. (currently amended) A drinking mouthpiece according to claim 12, further comprising a valve assembly (3) for the passage of liquid from a liquid container, which includes a flexible membrane (4) having at least one valve opening (5) and a substantially rigid membrane supporting element (7) having at least one valve opening (15), wherein, with the valve assembly (3) being in a closed position, the membrane (4) rests on the membrane supporting element (7) and the valve opening (5) of the membrane (4) is sealingly covered by the membrane supporting element (7) and the valve opening (15) of the membrane supporting element (7) is sealingly covered by the membrane (4), the membrane (4) being inwardly curved in said closed position, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein, during the external application of pressure to the drinking mouthpiece (1) and/or the application of an underpressure at the membrane side facing away from the membrane supporting element (7), the membrane (4) is in a resnapped, outwardly curved open position in which the valve openings (5, 15) of the membrane (4) and membrane supporting element (7), respectively, are released.

14. (currently amended) A drinking mouthpiece according to claim 13, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the membrane (4) is ~~each~~ substantially conical in its closed and open positions.

15. (currently amended) A drinking mouthpiece according to claim 13 ~~or 14~~, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the membrane supporting element (7) comprises a valve seat surface (8) substantially corresponding with the inwardly curved shape of the membrane (4) in its closed position.

16. (currently amended) A drinking mouth piece according to ~~any one of claims 13 to 15,~~ characterized in that claim 13, wherein the drinking mouthpiece (1) comprises a latch groove (6) intended to receive the membrane supporting element (7) configured as a latch body.
17. (currently amended) A drinking mouthpiece according to ~~any one of claims 13 to 16,~~ characterized in that claim 13, wherein the membrane supporting element (7) is connected with a fastening ring (10) via a web (9).
18. (currently amended) A drinking mouthpiece according to ~~any one of claims 13 to 17,~~ characterized in that claim 13, wherein the drinking mouthpiece (1) is designed to be substantially oval in top view.
19. (currently amended) A drinking mouthpiece according to ~~claims 18 and 17,~~ characterized in that claim 18, wherein the web (9) used to fasten the membrane supporting element (7) is designed in a plate-shaped manner with the plane defined by the plate-shaped web (9) extending in the direction of the longer axis of the drinking mouthpiece (1) in top view.
20. (currently amended) A drinking mouthpiece according to ~~any one of claims 13 to 19,~~ characterized in that claim 13, wherein the membrane (4) comprises several valve openings (5) arranged along a circular line.
21. (currently amended) A drinking mouthpiece according to ~~any one of claims 13 to 20,~~ characterized in that claim 13, wherein the membrane supporting element (7) comprises a substantially central valve opening (15).
22. (currently amended) A valve assembly according to ~~any one of claims 13 to 21,~~ characterized in that claim 13, wherein the mouthpiece (1), formed as a drinking spout, extends beyond the membrane (4), whereby an elevated drinking spout edge (17) is formed as a membrane protection and spacer element.

23. (currently amended) A drinking mouthpiece according to ~~any one of claims 13 to 22, characterized in that~~ claim 13, wherein the membrane supporting element (7) is made of polypropylene (PP).

24. (new) A drinking mouthpiece according to claim 12, wherein the soft drinking mouthpiece is made of a thermoplastic elastomer (TPE), and the hard lid is made of polypropylene (PP).